

Extract from "Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. Japan: 1931-1941, Vol. II, pp. 786-7

"Memorandum of a Conversation"

(Washington), December 7, 1941

The Japanese Ambassador asked for an appointment to see the Secretary at 1:00 p.m., but later telephoned and asked that the appointment be postponed to 1:45 as the Ambassador was not quite ready. The Ambassador and Mr. Kurusu arrived at the Department at 2:05 p.m. and were received by the Secretary at 2:20.

The Japanese Ambassador stated that he had been instructed to deliver at 1:00 p.m. the document which he handed the Secretary, but that he was sorry that he had been delayed owing to the need of more time to decode the message. The Secretary asked why he had specified one o'clock. The Ambassador replied that he did not know but that that was his instruction. The Secretary said that anyway he was receiving the message at two o'clock. After the Secretary had read two or three pages he asked the Ambassador whether this document was presented under instructions of the Japanese Government. The Ambassador replied that it was. The Secretary as soon as he had finished reading the document turned to the Japanese Ambassador and said:

"I must say that in all my conversations with you (the Japanese Ambassador) during the last nine months I have never uttered one word of untruth. This is borne out absolutely by the record. In all my fifty years of public service I have never seen a document that was more crowded with infamous falsehoods and distortions on a scale so huge that I never imagined until today that any Government on this planet was capable of uttering them."

The Ambassador and Mr. Kurusu then took their leave without making any comment.

A copy of the paper which was handed to the Secretary by the Japanese Ambassador is attached.

J(oseph) W. B(allantine).

*The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, took place on December 7, 1941, at 1:20 p.m., Washington time (7.50 a.m., Honolulu time), which was December 8, 3.20 a.m. Tokyo time. On December 8 at 6 a.m. Tokyo time (December 7, 4 p.m. Washington time), the Japanese imperial headquarters announced that war began as of "dawn" on that date.

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